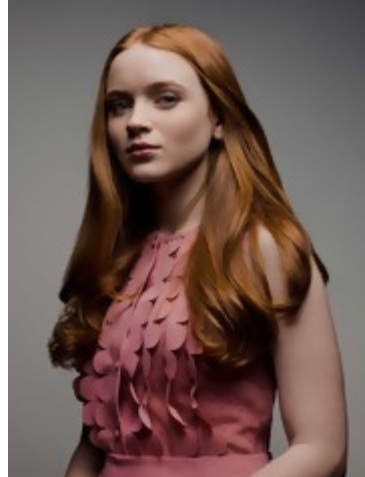




Don't Blink by TEENWOLFEV

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Summary: I've never known true fear until the summer of 1989 when my friends and I discovered something lurking in the shadows, the reason behind the missing children of Derry, Maine. Original Female Character. OC.

1. Chapter 1

I always believed that I was meant for greater things than being stuck in Derry, Maine. A small town with small minded people who didn't care about anything but themselves, a town of people who looked the other way when they saw something happening that wasn't morally acceptable. I suppose they thought it was none of their business, if it didn't affect them, they were quite happy to look the other way. I never understood that mentality. Billy told me that maybe those people were scared, unsure on how to act to some of the situations that happened right in front of them. Even with that explanation I still didn't understand. And I don't think I wanted too.

I didn't want to end up like some of the adults that lived here. No, my dream was to leave. Maybe get into some fancy school and never have to remember Derry, Maine again. I would be quite happy to forget some things of this town.

"Lori, sweetheart. You haven't touched any of your cereal, yet. Are you okay?" Mother asked. Her brown eyes swimming with concern as she glanced at me.

I nodded my eyes trying to focus on her eyes and not the dark bruise that peeked out from the collar of her dress. Mother never like me looking at her bruises or mentioning them. Whenever I mentioned them, she would shut down, barely talking to me afterwards. I didn't know if she was ashamed or if she pretended that the bruises that marred her body like a map weren't there at all. I was too afraid to ask. I didn't want to upset her again.

"I'm fine. Just not very hungry this morning." I replied.

Mother smiled, a small but beautiful smile that lifted her round face. "Must be excited for the last day of school. Are you coming back home when school's finished or are you and the boys going to ride your bikes around town?"

"No," I sighed slumping further into my seat. "Stan has to practise for his bar mitzvah so we're not going to hang out until tomorrow. I was thinking of going to the park or something though by myself. Maybe

do a bit of drawing."

"By yourself?" she asked. I nodded which made her smile fall and her lips to purse tightly together. "I don't think that's a good idea, Lori. To be by yourself at a time like this, with all these children disappearing. They still haven't found the culprit. Although that's not that surprising with the police we have. Don't know how some of them got into the force"

I bit my lip not to voice out my opinions on how they joined the force. Everyone one knew that the sheriff was an idiot who cared more about the power that he had behind the badge then helping anyone. The sheriff was more then happy to be surrounded by the people who acted and thought the same as him. One of those people were Oscar Bowers a racist who preferred to use his fist in any situation. Just like his son Henry who gleefully bullied everyone he could at school.

"Hopefully they find those poor children. I couldn't imagine if I lost you." Mother said gently caressing the top of my head. "At least they'll be setting a curfew soon for children. Maybe that will stop the person doing this horrible thing."

"Maybe." I almost whispered.

Some of those children that had went disappearing had went to my school, a few had even been in my year. And of those children had been Bill's little brother, George. He had gone to play outside on a rainy day and had never returned home. That had been a year ago and Bill was still trying to find him. I never told Bill, but I believed that George was dead. I believed that all the children that went missing would never be seen again. Not with how many children that were going missing.

Mum looked down at me with concerned eyes for a few moments before turning away from me with a small shake of her head. She cleared her throat and patted down her short auburn hair and began to smile again, seemingly wanting to forget the discussion of missing children.

"It's almost time for school. Is Bill riding past the house to come get

you?" Mother asked moving away from the table to watch the bacon sizzle that was cooking on the oven.

I nodded my head taking a few mouthfuls of cereal that would hopefully get me through until lunch. Bill and I always rode our bikes to school together. Bill loved the bike that he had gotten for his birthday last year when he turned thirteen, always having a goofball smile as he rode it around town. My parents had gotten me one a few weeks later after the many tumbles Bill and I would have when I would sit behind him on his back.

I shoved the last few bits of cereal into my mouth as quickly as I could as I heard the thumping of footsteps coming down the stairs. My father had woken up and I wasn't in the mood to be near him after noticing the new bruise that was now my mother's body. I grabbed my schoolbag and put my dish in the sink and began to walk as fast as I could to the front door with a quick kiss on the cheek for my mother as I escaped outside.

Thankfully I didn't have to wait very long as I heard a boy's voice echo through my street.

"Hi – ho Silver"

I threw my bag over my shoulders and got onto my bike as I waited for Bill to come to a stop next to me. I heard Bill's panting before I saw him, and I shook my head I twisted my body around to watch as he pulled up beside me with the same goofball smile that he always had when riding his bike.

"Trying to beat your normal time again?" I asked knowingly

"Thirty seconds shorter th – the – then last time." Bill stuttered gaining his breath back. "Now it only t – takes me s – seven minutes t- to get to yours. I'm g – getting f – faster."

I snorted standing a bit taller "Still not faster than me though"

"I'm way f – fas – faster than you. No one b – beat me on m-my bike" Bill protested eyebrows furrowed in stubbornness.

"Okay," I smirked holding my hand out in front of me. "A race then.

Me and you to school. Loser must buy a milkshake for the winner in the holidays. Any milkshake, that includes the special treat one that they have at the diner."

"B – but that's nearly f – five d – dollars." Bill frowned.

"Well it's my favourite kind and the one I want if I win. Unless you don't think you can win the race and want to opt out. It's alright I know boys don't like to lose to girls." I grinned widely. I knew Bill didn't care if I won or not when it came to other things. But this time it included his most precious possession.

"Fine," Bill said after a few seconds as he thought it over. He looked at me determinedly and shook my hand, agreeing to the deal. "Just don't cry when you lose."

"Like I would." I scoffed as we prepared ourselves to begin the race. "On the count of three. One, two...three!"

I felt like I was basically flying down the street as I raced Bill to school, the both of us dodging cars on the road as we pushed our legs faster and faster to make our bikes go quicker. My thighs were beginning to burn by the time we made it to school. I wasn't going to stop though, not when I was so close to beating Bill. And I did with only a few seconds to spare as I skidded to stop in front of the bike rack, waiting for Bill to stop too.

"F – fuck!" Bill exclaimed disappointedly as he stopped in front of me. "I was s – so close."

"Look's like you'll be buying me that five-dollar milkshake" I snickered as we put our bikes into the rack and began to walk into school. "I can practically taste it's strawberry flavour now."

"You suck" Bill shoved my shoulder lightly making me laugh.

"What's this about sucking. What or who is Lori sucking?"

I blushed furiously and swung around and punched a smirking Richie in the stomach making him groan and almost curl into himself. "Shut up, Richie! God do you even think before you say all the shit that you do?"

"That would require Richie to actually think." Stan said dryly.

"Or even have a brain." Eddie rolled his eyes sarcastically as he and Stan walked past Richie who was beginning to straighten himself up. Richie fiddled with his glasses as he shot both boys an offended look.

"Hey, I think." Richie defended himself. He looked at Eddie with a gleeful smirk. "I especially think about your mother late at night when I'm by my –"

Richie couldn't finish his sentence as Eddie suddenly leapt at him slapping Richie anywhere, he could get his hands on. Bill, Stan and I exchanged exhausted looks. This was a daily routine. Richie could never keep his mouth shut, especially if he thought it was something good. The bad thing was that whatever came out of his mouth was never very good for us. It either ended with one of us nearly strangling him or pulling him away before Henry Bowers and his little gang of bullies pummelled him to the ground. Either way it usually ended with Richie getting hurt.

The bell rang indicating the start of the school day and we all began to walk to our classes. Stan, Bill and I going to art and a squabbling Richie and Eddie going to maths.

Since it was the last day of school before summer break the teachers barely gave us much work, they mostly just gave us worksheets to revise over summer that would probably end up in the bin when I got home. I practically leapt out of my seat when the end of day bell rang, eager to get out of the school building as doors from other classrooms fling open and rowdy children spill out into the halls like sheep. Books were being hurled in the trash, lockers emptied out, papers strewn all over the floor, summer has officially commenced. I pushed my way past some of the older kids who barely glanced my way as I struggled to find my friends amongst everyone that filled the hallway.

"Excuse me," I muttered as a girl wearing hockey gear shouldered past me towards the girl's bathroom. I guess she was in a hurry. Luckily, I saw Bill's tall frame up ahead with Richie's shaggy hair peeking behind his shoulder and quickly hurried over before I lost him and the others.

"Basically, they slice part of his dick off." I heard Eddie say as I pushed my way in between Richie and Bill. Maybe I should have lost them, I thought shooting Eddie a disgusting look. The one bad thing about being friends with only boys was that they didn't have any filter. None, especially when I was around.

"But then Stan will have nothing left." Richie snickered making Bill laugh as well.

I rolled my eyes. The boys loved making fun about Stan's religion. Although Stan didn't mind it, as long it was us. He got bullied by others, especially the Bowers gang because he was one of the few Jewish people in Derry.

"You're an idiot. They remove the foreskin when he's a baby." I told them.

"Hey, guys wait up!" Stan came up behind us moving in better Bill and Eddie with a panicked look on his face. I guess he didn't want to be stuck in the halls by himself either. It was easier for the bullies to gang up one a person if you were by yourself.

"Hey, Stan what happens at the bar mitzvah anyway? Ed says they slice the e- end of your d – dick off." Bill asked turning to Stan curiously.

"Yeah and I heard that the Rabi is going to pull down your pants and turn to the crowd and say there's the view" Richie exclaimed grinning mischievously throwing his hands up dramatically.

Stan raised his eyebrows unimpressed and explained "At the bar mitzvah I read from the Torah and make a speech and suddenly I become a man"

"I can think of more ways to become a man." Richie wriggled his eyebrows up and down suggestively.

"Yuck," I scoffed nearly gagging. Richie loved making dirty jokes unfortunately. I think he liked to see how far he could go before my face turned red in embarrassment. "Stan actually has more chance becoming a man by reading out of the Torah then you do by doing

any of the things you're thinking."

"You could always help me?" Richie smirked winking at me. I blushed and scowled at him ready to give him a scathing reply but was stopped by Billy who nudged me harshly in my side. I turn to glare at him but stopped as I saw exactly why he had nudged me. The Bowers hands were leaning against the lockers ahead of us and there was no way around them except to walk past them.

I gripped my bag tightly trying to avoid their piercing eyes as they watched us walk past them. Unfortunately, I glanced up to early and made eye contact with Patrick who looked at us all with a wide grin and glittering eyes that promised nothing good. He looked at me and licked his lips making me look down again quickly with a churning feeling in my stomach. They were all horrible bullies, rough and mean but Patrick made my skin crawl with the way he looked at others, especially girls. He had been suspended three times because had felt up a few girls. I wouldn't be surprised if there were others. I shuddered and crossed my arms in front of my chest.

"Think they'll sign my yearbook?" Richie joked as we walked further away from the bowers gang. He nervously adjusted his glasses as he continued speaking "Sorry for taking a hot steamy dump in your backpack last week."

"Yeah and then they can sign mine. Sorry for pushing you into the lockers just yesterday." I said glancing over my shoulder to make sure we were far enough away from them. I had gotten a bruise along my hip from being pushed into the locker by Belch who had been egged on by the others who heckled me by calling me freckled face.

"At least we don't h – have to deal with them this s – summer." Bill said optimistically.

We all exchanged relieved smiles and nodded. One of the many highlights about summer, no bullies that got their kicks out of beating up people weaker and smaller than them. If we stayed away from their usual hangouts, we would be fine. We finally made our way out of the school building and walked over to one of the bins outside and opened our school bags throwing all our schoolwork into the bin.

"Best feeling ever." Stan said as his shoulders seemed to slump in relief, the opposite of his usually tense posture.

"Try tickling your pickle for the first time." Richie suggested helpfully as he put his now empty bag back over his shoulders. Stan glared at the innocent looking Richie as I zipped my bag back up rolling my eyes. I swear Richie forgot I was a girl most times.

"You do realise I'm, here right?" I asked Richie. "And as a girl I don't need to hear about anyone tickling their pickle. Especially yours."

Richie shrugged and put his hand on my shoulder. "Yeah but you're not really a girl – "

"– Oh really, then what the hell am I?"

"You're like a boy. Just a boy with long hair and tits."

"Richie!" I exclaimed knocking his hand off my body with a furious slap. I glared at him, debating if it was possible to make his brain explode just by looking at him. "Don't talk about my tits."

"I wasn't." Richie huffed defending himself. "I only mentioned them and if we're going to talk about them can I just say you've really developed this past few months, are you still wearing a training bra?"

Before I could get my hands on him Stan punch him in between the shoulder blades making Richie cry loudly and turn around to Stan opening his mouth to yell at him, thankfully Eddie spoke up interrupting him.

"Hey what are we going to do tomorrow?" Eddie asked looked between the group of us.

"Kill Richie." I muttered glaring at the shaggy haired boy. I just knew my face was all red, clashing with my hair and freckles. I probably to looked like a fire hydrant with my red hair, red freckles and flushed face.

"Training." Richie said looking at Eddie with a serious look on his usual goofy face.

"Training? Training for what." Eddie replied confused. Richie wasn't in any sports, none of the boys were. I was the only one who was a part of a sport team which was the school swimming team. It was pretty good team, too. The school pool was a place for me to go to for when the boys annoyed me too much and I wanted to hide away from the bullies. A little place for me to escape everything.

"Street fighting." Richie explained. That made more sense. Richie loved playing at the arcade and his favourite game was street fighter. He could stay there for hours on end.

"Is that how you want to spend your summer?" Eddie asked perplexed. "Inside an arcade."

"Beat's staying inside your mother." Richie chortled holding his hand out for a high five from Stan who pulled it down, ignoring the high five, as he suggested going to the quarry. I grinned and nodded my head. That sounded like a great idea. They hadn't gone swimming there in ages, it was one of the few places in Derry that was fun. Eddie shrugged and nodded his head agreeing with the plan.

"Guys we have to go to the b – barrens." Bill spoke up suddenly looking at them all with a hopeful expression. The mood changed suddenly as we all avoided looking at each other. I had forgotten and it seemed that the others had too. Bill had had spoken about looking for George during the summer, he told us he now had an idea that George was in the barrens, maybe stuck in the drains. Alive. Bill always spoke about finding George alive. And no one had the heart or the courage to argue about it. We all knew that George was dead. It had been too long, to many children going missing for even the slight chance of him being alive.

Stan nodded, his shoulders tense again. "Right."

"Betty Ripson's mum," Eddie suddenly spoke up in a quiet voice looking to the left of us. We all turned around to see an older woman standing in front of the school with two police officers behind her. I frowned at Betty's mum. She looked pale, tired as her eyes frantically scanned every child's face as they left the school.

"Does she actually think she's going to see her coming out of school?"

Stan asked with a troubled frown on his face. Betty had been in our year. A nice girl who never said a bad thing towards or about us. She had been the most recent child to go missing.

"Maybe she thinks Betty's been hiding away from home this past few weeks." Eddie suggested.

"You'll think they'll actually find her?"

"Sure. In a ditch all decomposed, covered in maggots and smelling like Eddie's mum's underwear." Richie said turning his back on the sad sight of Betty's mother who was still searching but not finding her daughter's face amongst any of the children.

"It's not funny Richie" I barked turning away from the sight as well. He really didn't know when to shut his mouth sometimes.

"S – She's not d – dead. She's m – m – missing." Bill said stuttered heavily on the word missing. He looked so serious. So much older in that moment as he stared down Richie who nervously adjusted his glasses with an uncomfortable look on his face.

"Sorry, Bill. You're right, she's missing." Richie agreed nervously. Bill turned around and began to walk away, his shoulders hunched over. We tried to quickly catch up to him, it was never good to leave Bill by himself when he began to get in this type of mood. "You know the Barrens aren't even that bad. Who doesn't like splashing around in shitty water – "

Before Richie could finish his sentence, he was pulled back by his school bag, almost choking him as he was slammed into Stan making them tumble to the ground. I stood still as I noticed what had happened. Henry Bowers stood there sneering down at Richie with a gleeful twisted smirk. And not far from him came the rest of the bower gang. Patrick bent down and picked up Stan's Kippah that had fallen off his head and onto the ground beside him.

"Nice frisbee, flamer." Patrick mocked grinning widely.

"Hey, give that back." Stan protested struggling to stand back up. But Patrick had already threw it into a window of bus that had drove past

them. I quickly moved out of the way as Henry, Belch and Patrick walked past me. Patrick hesitated just for a moment as he walked past letting his friends walk ahead of him.

"Looking good, freckles." Patrick smirked as his eyes looked up and down my body. I shuddered crossing my arms in front of my breast, trying to block his view. It was disgusting, he was sickening. I would have preferred Henry's brute force then Patrick's slimy hands going anywhere near me. I scowled him, too scared to say anything. Too scared of retaliation from Patrick. Thankfully he followed his friends as they shouldered past Bill who stared after them, his face scrunched up in anger as he stuttered loudly.

"Y -y – you suck Bowers!"

"Shut up, Bill" Richie warned, using his common sense this time to know not to say anything that would get their attention again. But it was too late as the bower gang froze and turned around to look at us again.

"Y – you s – s – say something, B – B – Billy?" Henry mockingly stuttered walking to Bill, almost in a predatory manner. Like a lion hunting its prey. "You got a free ride this year because of your little brother. Rides over, Denbrough. Summer's going to be hurt training. For you and your faggot friends"

Henry licked the palm of his hand and slapped it against Bill's face lightly. He gave us one more glare before walking off with Belch and a chuckling Patrick. We watched as they walked over to Victor who stood beside Belch's car and got inside the care before driving off.

"Wish he would go missing." Richie said watching them leave the school. I glanced at Richie and couldn't help but silently agree. Henry Bowers was a horrible person and I certainly wouldn't miss him if he suddenly disappeared. Him and asshole group of friends.

"He's probably the one doing it" Eddie proclaimed with a clenched jaw.

2. Chapter 2

I've never been good at asking the important questions. The uncomfortable ones that make me squirm and debate if I should ask them anyway. But as Bill and I walked our bikes down the road one of those uncomfortable question's were on the tip of my tongue and I wondered if he would get angry at me if I blurted it out. And that question was what was he going to do if he didn't find his little brother this summer? I understood Bill, better than most people, certainly more then his parents who ignored his existence since George's disappearance. It was like Bill was just a shadow of a thought now in his household. I knew he was hurting and the longer they didn't find George the worse he felt.

But I didn't want Bill to hurt anymore, I wanted to help him so bad but in the end I just didn't know how. I mean how can I help Bill when he didn't want to be helped. It was a struggle I tried to fix and understand. I glanced at Bill between the curtain of my hair and knew I had to ask him. Hopefully he wouldn't become upset.

"Bill," I spoke up trying not to appear nervous. He looked over at me and I paused as I noticed the calm expression on his face. He looked so relax, almost peaceful, something that was becoming rare these days. I gulped and continued speaking, "About this summer, I know you want to try and find George but what happens if we can't find him?"

"We will," Bill replied quickly as he stopped walking making me stop as well. "I think he's in the d – drains, maybe he fell in, we j – just have to try. G – Georgie must be there. I know you don't like the b – b – barrens and you don't have to come if y – you don't want too."

"Of course, I'm going to come, Bill. I promised."

"Yeah but you don't l – like going down there. You used to be ter – terrified when we were little."

"I'm not anymore," I told him. It was a lie, a very strong one. I hated the barrens and the idea of going into the drains gave me goose bumps. What if we got lost down there? I didn't like the idea of being

stuck down there in the dark.

Bill gave me a doubtful look and I smiled as convincingly as I could. Bill shook his head smiling slightly as we began to walk our bikes along the road again. It was silent for a few minutes as I tilted my head upwards to appreciate the sun against my face, the quietness was broken by Bill who sighed loudly making me look over at him. He was looking up at the sky with a wistful look on his face.

"When we find Georgie, maybe everything will go b – back to normal again." Bill said quietly.

I smiled forcefully and replied just as quietly with small, "Maybe"

How else was I supposed to reply? I couldn't just blurt out what the boys and I thought. Oh, Bill we think you should stop and realise that George wasn't coming back. That he wasn't going to see his little brother again. No. I couldn't do that. I would leave him to his fantasy just a little while longer, then I will have to say something. But not now.

"Have you written any new stories?" I asked wanting to direct the conversation to something to a lighter topic. Thankfully it worked as Bill began to ramble on excitedly about a new story he had come up with. A story about a haunted house terrorising the family living inside it. Bill had an amazing imagination and he loved coming up with stories. Sometimes he would write them down and would have me draw pictures for his books. He liked to joke that we would become famous, working together as he wrote stories and I illustrated them. It was a nice dream though. I loved drawing the different things that Bill came up with.

We must have gone back and forth rambling on about his stories for 10 minutes before we had to split up to go to our different homes. Bill parted with a wave and quick reminder for me to be ready in the morning for our exploration of the Barrens with the rest of the boys. I nodded and waved back before riding my bike the rest of the way home until I made it up my driveway and left my bike next to my dad's blue ford before walking inside.

"I'm home!" I called out kicking off my shoes near the door and

dropping my empty bag on the hanger.

"In the kitchen, Lori." Mother's voice echoed from the middle of the house. I made my way into the kitchen, opening my mouth to tell her about my day when I noticed father sitting at the table reading the newspaper. I shut my mouth quickly and stood still. He was usually in his office by this time.

Mother smiled at me from her spot by the stove seemingly oblivious to my confusion.

"How was school, honey?"

"School was good, happy that it's the holidays now. The boys and I are going to go to the arcade tomorrow and play games. If that's alright?"

"Of cour – "

"You're not going to spend all your holidays at the arcade, are you?" Father interjected looking up from his newspaper. The same light blue eyes that I had stared back at me with a judgemental glint in them. "You should be revising your schoolwork, not playing every day."

"No, sir." I replied looking at the ground. "We're only going tomorrow, that's all."

"Good, I don't need those boys distracting you from your schooling. You won't get very far in life if you just mess around with those friends of yours." Father muttered and went back to his newspaper. He never liked my friends. Well, he didn't really like most of the things I liked. He thought most of the things I enjoyed were silly or not well suited for me. Father suddenly threw his newspaper across the table with a frown on his face. "Still haven't found that missing girl yet. What do the police do exactly? You know what they do, fuck all!"

"Jon," Mother looked at him sternly. She didn't like it when he swore in front of me.

"Don't fucking start. There're more missing kids then there are fingers

on my hands. And all we got are a bunch of lazy cunts who barely lift a finger to do anything." Father grumbled stretching his hand out for the beer bottle next to him. I shuffled on my feet nervously as I noticed that it was mostly empty. I peeked over my shoulder to the kitchen bin and saw four other beer bottles piled up next to it. I wondered how long he had been drinking. I quickly turned around when Mother said my name sharply, pretending that I hadn't been eyeing off the beer bottles.

"Why don't you go upstairs to your bedroom?" Mother suggested firmly.

I nodded my head and quickly walked up the stairs to my bedroom as mother and father began to talk to each other in hushed voices. She was probably reprimanding him, and he was not going to care or listen. He never did. I shut the bedroom door behind me, making sure to lock it. I never liked it when father was drinking, and it made me feel safer to know that he couldn't get into my bedroom.

He never came near me though, not when he was drunk, no he preferred to either be by himself or hover around mother. I knew that in a couple of hours they would start arguing with each other like they always do when he drinks, and I wondered if I would spot a new bruise added to mother's collection tomorrow morning. God, I hoped not but mother was like a moth attracted to the light, which was my father, and she always got zapped. Mother used to tell me stories when I was little about them when they were young, when they were happy and hopelessly in love. I think she clung to them, the memories, because when I looked at them now, I didn't see that. Just a woman who yearned for the past and a man who drank to forget the bad moments in life.

And then there was me stuck in the middle not knowing what to do. Like Limbo. I was just stuck with no directions on where to go or what to do. So I escaped the only way I knew by grabbing my drawing book and my Walkman and sat down at my writing desk, Cyndi Lauper's voice echoing in my ears as I drew the beach, a distant memory of when my parents took me there on my eight birthday. That had been six years ago, and I still remember the sea breeze on my face and the happiness I felt. I missed it.

I stayed up until nine that night before creeping downstairs and quickly getting food for myself to eat before rushing back upstairs. The house was quiet, a sign that my father went to bed early, a good indication that nothing bad had happened when I locked myself in my room. I went to sleep that night relishing in the quietness of the house. The next day I took my time getting ready for Barrens, appreciating the fact that I could relax for the entire summer, Bill had wanted to go as soon as possible but Stan had to practise again for his Bar Mitzvah in the morning so we had all decided to go in the afternoon.

"Good morning, sweetie." Mother said kissing my cheek as she put a plate of pancakes in front of me. She looked happy and with a quick look I saw that there were no new bruises peeking out from underneath her clothing. It had been a good night for my mother then.

"Morning," I replied shoving a piece of pancake in my mouth making my mother click her tongue disapprovingly.

"I swear the more you hang out with those boys, the more you turn into one." Mother sighed with a heavy roll of her eyes.

"I could do worse," I retorted after chewing my food. "I could hang around all those popular girls like Gretta and get my kicks off by making out with the Bowers gang. Just think I could be bringing Henry Bowers into the house as your future son – in – law."

I had never seen my mother's face go as pale as it did right then, and I couldn't help but snicker at the horrified look on her face. God, even thinking about touching Henry made me want to puke my guts out. I didn't see why Gretta and her friends thought him and his gang were so amazing. I guess idiots preferred their own kind.

"Yes," Mother cleared her throat, patting her chest gently like there was something heavy on it. Maybe she nearly vomited at the idea too. "Well I guess there are worse things."

"Lori!"

Bill's voice rang out from outside the house as I quickly shovelled the

rest of the pancakes into my mouth, giving my mother a sticky maple syrup kiss that she cringed away from making me chortle as I ran outside. Mother never liked getting dirty. I waved at Eddie, Richie and Bill who waited for me across the street on their bikes as I grabbed my own and walked over to them.

"Did you get all the food we need for our trip exploring the Barrens?" I asked them

"Yeah, we've got chips, lollies and chocolate. I made sure to pack some red liquorice for you too, I know you don't like chocolate." Eddie replied making me smile at him thankfully. Leave it to Eddie to remember my favourite treat.

"You missed out this morning, Lori. Eddie had to give his mother a nice big wet kiss on the cheek before her left." Richie snickered, laughing harder as a red – faced Eddie punched in the arm.

"You sound a bit jealous, Richie." I joked as I threw my leg over my bike to hop on it.

"Well I did suggest I give her one to, but Eddie got to jealous and flustered and pushed me out of the house. I bet she would have liked it. I'm a great kisser. Although she would have probably liked it too much and wanted a bit more. Good thinking Eddie about pushing me out of the house. No babe can handle this" Richie smirked gesturing to his lanky frame.

"A good kisser," Eddie spluttered aghast as he stared at Richie. "How would you know? The closest thing you've gotten to kissing is your hand."

"Or his pillow" Bill chimed in grinning.

Richie faked laughed and threw his middle finger up at them making us all burst out into laughter as we rode our bikes to Stans house. It didn't take long for Stan to come rushing out of his house to greet us, nearly falling off his bike in his eagerness to get on it. I leaned forward to help him steady himself as he shakily got onto the bike.

"You, okay?" I asked a little concerned. Stan nodded his head smiling

tensely. He must have stuffed up his Bar Mitzvah practise. "Eager to get away from your dad, huh?"

"Yeah," Stan agreed quickly glancing over his shoulder like he was expecting his dad to walk outside the house. Bill led us out of town as we rode our bike, taking shortcuts that would avoid the popular hangouts where the Bowers gang usually hovered around, it didn't take long for us to make our way into the Barrens. We left our bikes near the water as we walked over to one of the openings to a large drain that was next to the flowing water.

Bill and Richie walked in first leaving Stan, Eddie and I outside as we peeked through the branches that covered the opening of the drain slightly. A gust of wind went past throwing the stench of the drain into my face and I quickly covered mouth trying not to gag. It smelled disgusting. I looked down at the water in the drain and cringed, it smelled and looked horrible. What a way to spend my summer, walking in shitty water in the dark.

"That's poison ivy," Stan pointed to the branches of leaves that slightly covered the opening, "that's poison ivy and that's poison ivy."

"Where?" Eddie asked frantically taking a few steps to stand closer to Stan and I. Like we could do anything, I thought. Eddie looked at Stan with a panicked look and asked, "Where's the poison ivy?"

"Nowhere," Richie rolled his eyes exasperated as he walked further into the drain. He looked over his shoulder at them with an annoyed look on his face, holding a branch he had broken off outside and used it to wave at them. "Not every plant has poison ivy, Stanley."

"Okay, well I'm starting to get itchy a – and I think – "Eddie's panicked stutter was interrupted by Richie who spoke over him.

"Do you use the same bathroom as your mother?"

"Sometimes, yeah."

"Then you probably have crabs."

"That's so not funny."

I choked down my laughter, it had been totally funny. I stepped slightly forward peeking further into the drain trying to gain the courage to follow Richie and Bill in as they walked further into the drain. I looked around the drain frowning, it looked dark the further the boys went in away from the sunlight. Not even the flashlight in Bill's hand was making me comfortable.

"Aren't you guy's coming in?" Richie asked looking at us expectantly.

I froze looking back at Eddie and Stan who looked as excited as me at the idea of walking into the drain. Eddie shook his head pulling a disgusted look as he scrunched up his face as he pointed down at the water that was close to my feet.

"Nuh – ah that's grey water." Eddie proclaimed

Richie rolled his eyes, shaking his head. "What the hell is grey water?"

"It's basically piss and shit, so I'm just telling you, you're splashing around in millions of gallons of Derry piss and – are y – you serious, what are you doing?" Eddie spluttered disgusted as we watched Richie put branch into the water and then sniff the end of it that was drenched with the grey water. I closed my eyes and looked away from him. So fucking revolting. He would not be going near me later.

"It doesn't smell like ca – ca to me signor." Richie said in a fake Mexican voice.

"Okay, I can smell that from here!" Eddie exclaimed looking seconds away from ripping the branch away from Richie's face. But that meant going into the drain, so it left him staring at Richie with a strong look of horror on his face.

"That's just your breath wafting back into your face."

Eddie rolled his eyes throwing his hands up in frustration. "Have you ever heard of a staph infection?"

"I'll give you a staph infection."

"That is so unsanitary. You are legit swimming in a toilet bowl right

now. Have you ever heard of a esar – " Eddie shrieked in repulsion as Richie suddenly threw a piece of drenched clothing in our direction using his branch. I nearly tripped on my own feet as I bumped into Stan to get out of the way and cringed as I felt a few wet drops land on my bare legs.

"Goddamn it, Richie!" I yelled shaking my wet leg in disgust. "I'm going to grab that branch and shove it up your – "

"Guys!" Bill's voice exclaimed further down the drain. My threat got caught in the back of throat as I saw Bill holding up a shoe with the flashlight beaming down at it dauntingly. I gulped nervously and glanced back up to Bill's anxious face.

"Shit," Stan squeaked, his voice nearly breaking. "Don't tell me that's – "

"No G – Georgie wore galoshes" Bill stuttered walking back to the opening of the drain. I took a few steps forward to look closer at the sneaker in his hands. They weren't very big. They looked like a child's shoe.

"Whose is it?" Eddie asked shakily

"It's Betty Ripson's" Richie said looking between us all with wide eyes. All humour had left his face, instead there was now a growing worry filling his eyes.

"Oh, shit," Eddie whispered as began to panic, his voice getting louder and louder. I couldn't take my eyes of the shoes. Why would her shoe be in the drain? It didn't make sense. She had last been seen at the park, nowhere near a drain unlike George. "Fuck! No, I don't like this."

"How do you think Betty feels? Running around these tunnels with only one frigging shoe." Richie joked half – heartedly hopping on his foot. He chuckled slightly until he saw that none of us were laughing with him. We weren't in the joking mood. Right now, was not the time to laugh, instead I felt like going back home and hiding. I suddenly felt scared.

"What if she's still here?" Stan asked looking over Bill and Richie's shoulder, peering further into the drain tunnel.

Bill frowned and looked back as well and without a word to us began to walk back into the drain tunnel with Richie following him. I gulped nervously but shuffled in after them, slowly following as I tried to avoid the grey water, practically hugging the walls to not fall in it. Richie turned back to stare at Eddie and Stan who stayed outside with worried looks.

"Aren't you guys coming?"

"My mom will have an aneurism if she finds out I was playing down here, I'm serious" Eddie shook his head taking a step back from the opening of the drain. He looked over at Bill who was using the flashlight to see further into the darkness. "Bill?"

Bill turned around and looked at Eddie and Stan. He didn't look as scared as the rest of us, more determined than anything, "I – If I was Betty Rispson, I would want us to find me. G – G - Georgie too."

"What if I don't want to find them?" Eddie said nervously, his hands clenched by his sides. I looked at him shocked and I wasn't the only one. Bill was staring at him almost looking betrayed. Eddie stuttered slightly as he tried to explain himself, "I mean, no offense Bill, but I don't want to end up like George. I don't want to end up missing either."

"He has a point." Stan agreed glancing at Bill whose mouth had parted in surprise. "It's summer! We're supposed to be having fun. This isn't fun. This is scary and disgusting – "

A huge crash of water sounded next to us making us jump and turn around to face what had made the noise. A chubby boy stood there barely standing as he struggled to get out of the water. My eyes went wide as I saw the blood that covered his shirt and face. I was pushed aside by Richie who walked out of the drain tunnel to get a closer look.

"Holy shit! What happened to you?"

3. Chapter 3

I had known before the school holidays that this summer was going to be different from the rest. Bill had wanted to find George and as the supportive friends that we tried to be since George had gone missing, we all had agreed to help him. No matter if we all thought that we wouldn't find the missing boy. No, it was more of the idea of being there for Bill because right now he didn't have anyone else. No adults were there to help. The police had given up on George and Bill's parents barely noticed that they had another son since George disappeared. He only had us, Richie, Stan, Eddie and I. The self-proclaimed loser club. Our little band of misfits.

But none of our plans for this summer involved saving a boy we barely know from bleeding to death. Okay, so maybe I was being dramatic about the whole bleeding to death, but he certainly didn't look good. His chubby face was pale underneath all the dirt and blood that covered his face, and he was bleeding through his shirt.

"What's your name?" I asked helping him sit behind Bill who volunteered to share his bike to ride back into town. There was nothing around the Barrens that would help the boy and by the way he was warily watching his surroundings he didn't want to be near the Barrens either.

"Ben," he muttered sitting behind Bill. "Ben Hanscom."

"Well I'd like to say it was nice to meet you, but I don't think that would be the appropriate context in this situation," I joked half-heartedly. I remembered the boy now. He was the new kid in our year. I had never seen him this close before. But I knew he got bullied bad because of his weight. I had heard Henry and his hang call him 'fat boy' sometimes. I glanced down at his shirt and frowned as I saw that his shirt had begun to stick to his stomach because of the blood. I let go of Ben as he adjusted himself onto the bike comfortably and tapped Bill's back, "We should go to the pharmacy in town to get some stuff for Ben. If we ask our parents there going to want to know where we were."

Bill frowned and nodded, agreeing with my plan, and turned to the

others. "Come on guys, were going to the pharmacy."

"You still haven't told us what the fuck happened to you." Richie said loudly as he rode his bike next to Bill's so he could talk to Ben who was trying to his shirt away from his body.

"It was Henry Bowers and his friends. They took me to that kissing bridge and hung me over it. I thought they were going to push me over the railing, but Henry took out this knife and started to carve something into my stomach, I only got away because I surprised them by leaning backwards over the railing." Ben told them looking down at his lap. He didn't look scared as he was telling them, instead he just looked sad as his eyes began to tear up slightly. He rubbed them roughly looking away from us.

"Fuck! Jesus Christ!" Eddie exclaimed wide eyed as we all exchanged horrified looked. I knew that Henry was rough, I've had enough bruises from him to know about how hard he punches, but something like this was just, god I couldn't even think of the right word, psychotic, mentally deranged, heck all of them together. I glanced back at the bleeding Ben and realised how incredibly lucky that he had been to get away from Bowers Gang.

"Are they still out there? What if they find us helping you? Oh, god we're going to be carved through by Henry's knife next – "

" – We'll be fine," Bill said interrupting Eddie's panicking. He sent as all a small but reassuring smile that lifted my mood slightly. "We'll go to t- the pharmacy and get B – Ben ch – checked out before Henry even thinks ab -about coming down here."

"Okay, let's go then." Stan said and began to ride his bike our of the Barrens with more eagerness then he did ride it here. He was happy to leave the Barrens behind. Eddie and Richie followed behind him closely with Eddie worriedly speaking to anyone who would listen about infections and other diseases.

I was about to ride after them when I saw that Bill hadn't even moved yet to follow them, I turned around to look at him and hesitated as I saw him looking behind us towards the drain again. I was going to give him just a moment to think when I glanced at Ben's bloody face

and decided that it was time to go. Maybe we would come again if Bill was able to persuade Eddie and Stan about visiting the Barrens again.

"Bill," I called out gently gaining his attention as he looked back at me with unfocused eyes. I smiled tightly at him, "Come on, the others have left."

Bill looked behind him once more and nodded as he followed behind me as we caught up to the boys, Eddie was still rambling even more loudly than before as we rode our bikes back into the town, towards the back of the pharmacy. We dropped our bikes onto the ground as Ben slowly sat down onto one of the store crates, clutching his stomach. There was more blood now, gathering at the bottom of his shirt. The sight of it made me tug on my hair worriedly. I had no idea how to fix up a cut, especially if it was as big as the one that Ben had on his stomach.

"Richie and Lori, you guys stay here." Bill ordered before running to the front of the pharmacy with Stan and Eddie in tow. It was a smart idea to take them, they would know more about the first aid stuff than Richie and me. Especially Eddie who probably memorised the first aid book like it was his bible or favourite comic book.

"It was nice to meet you before you died." Richie suddenly said. I looked over at him and stared at him perplexed. He shuffled his feet awkwardly and looked away from Ben and me, staring at the wall in front of him with flushed cheeks. Richie was never good talking to new people especially when they didn't get his sense of humour.

"Has it stopped bleeding?" I asked leaning down to Ben who had lifted his shirt slightly up to look at his stomach. He quickly pulled it down when I got closer to him, his pale face flushing as he stared back at me nervously.

"Yeah, a little bit."

"Did you see what Henry carve?"

"It was the letter 'h'. I think he was trying to carve his name into my stomach."

I winced looking down at his bloody shirt, I couldn't imagine having Henry's name carved anywhere on my body. I would rather be beaten black and blue before that happened. I glanced back up Ben who had begun to pull at his shirt again. It must feel disgusting to have that blood sticking to his body. I couldn't help with the body on his stomach, but I could help with the blood on his face I realised as I remembered that water bottle that I had in my bag.

I turned around and opened my bag and took the water bottle out from it. I urged it into Ben's confused hands as I reached for one of my unused hanky's that was at the bottom and wetted it. I pressed it against the bleeding cut on Ben's head, stopping as I saw him wince and pull away from my touch.

"Sorry," I apologised pulling the wet hanky away from him.

"No, it's okay." Ben replied leaning back into my touch as I wiped away the blood on his face, more gently then I had before. My once clean hanky was turning a dark brown colour as the blood and dirt on his face transferred onto it. He didn't look as bad as he did before. Ben looked up at me with a shy smile that brightened his whole face, "Thanks, Lori."

I smiled back at him "You owe me a new hanky."

"What are they doing in there?" Richie suddenly asked looking down the back alleyway. "Discussing what tampons, they need. You should have gone with them, Lori."

"They've got Eddie with them. He's probably cleaning out the store of medical supplies." I said rolling my eyes as he sighed loudly leaning back against the wall with a small pout. He was probably waiting for me to react about the tampon comment he had made. The little shit was the only one brave enough to mention about my female hygiene, the other boys just squirmed and blushed.

"We're back, we're back!" Eddie's voice echoed down the alley as they ran over to us, Eddie's arms were full of bandages, bottles and tape. He would make a pretty good doctor if he wasn't so freaked out about germs. I moved out of the way as Eddie leaned down in front of Ben and lifted his shirt to look at his wound. Ben glanced up at me with a

red face looking embarrassed, so I walked away from them to stand beside Bill who hovered to the side watching everything.

"Just suck the wound." Richie suggested as Eddie began to open the medical supplies in front of him. Eddie opened some of the bottles and poured a little of it onto a bandage and applied it to Ben's stomach making hiss between in his teeth in pain.

"I need to focus right now." Eddie said not looking away from what he was doing. A clear suggestion for Richie to shut up. "Can you pass me something, can you get my second fanny pack, I have something in it."

"Why do you have two fanny packs?" Stan asked. It was a good question, I thought. The fanny pack that Eddie had on already was massive enough to hold a lot of his medication. I didn't think he needed another one. But I guess Eddie liked to be prepared and maybe whatever was in his second fanny pack could help Ben who was looking slightly better as he looked between us all confused. It was easy to get confused hanging around us, even for a short time. I remembered when we tried to make up our own language when we were younger, it didn't work because none of us could remember what the hell the other was saying.

I glanced over at Bill beside me and stopped when I noticed that he was no longer standing near us but instead was standing near the front of the pharmacy talking to a ginger haired girl. It was Beverly Marsh, a pretty girl in our year that Bill had a crush on. Half of the boys in our year did. Beverly had been the first girl to develop physically then the rest of the girls in our year which caught the boy's attention. It hadn't made her many friends with any of the girls, because of this.

I looked back towards the now squabbling boys in front of me as Beverly and Bill walked over towards us, so I didn't look like I was peeping on them even though I was, it was funny seeing Bill all red in the face talking to Beverly.

"Are you okay? That looks like it hurts." Beverly asked concerned as she stared down at Ben who pulled his shirt down quickly ignoring the affronted squawk of Eddie as he sat up a bit straighter looking

back at Beverly.

"Oh, no. I'm good. I just fell." Ben lied as he smiled up at Beverly who raised her eyebrows in disbelief. He wasn't a very good liar.

"Yeah right into Henry Bowers." Richie scoffed loudly.

"Shut u – up, R – R – Richie!" Bill stuttered sternly. He glanced at Beverly who didn't even notice as she stared down at Ben with a paling face. She got bullied by Henry too, probably worse than we ever did. Henry had liked her and when she turned him down, he had spread rumours about Beverly, horrible ones that insinuated that she was a slut. And everyone believed it, the adults and the kids of Derry.

"What? He did!"

"You sure that they got the right stuff? To fix you up." Beverly asked sending an embarrassed Ben a smile.

"Y – You know w – what w- we'll take c – car of him." Bill stuttered gesturing to Richie, Stan, me and Eddie who had begun to pull Ben's shirt back up only for Ben to quickly slap it away. Eddie scowled and pulled out more medical supplies muttering under his breath. "Th – Thanks for the h – help Beverly."

"Sure. Maybe I'll see you around." Beverly said looking at us with a hopeful glint in her eyes.

"Well we we're thinking of going to the g – g- gorge tomorrow. If you want to come?" Bill suggested. I looked over at the other boys seemed just as confused as I was, I didn't know we we're going to the gorge tomorrow. But I wasn't going to rebuttal his idea, going to the gorge would be great. Anything but exploring the Barrens would be awesome.

Beverly looked excited at the invitation but looked over at us with an unsure expression. I smiled and nodded agreeing with Bill who shot me a thankful look.

"Yeah, it'll be nice to have another girl around."

"Good to know, thanks." Beverly grinned and waved goodbye as she

walked away. A slight bounce in her step as she disappeared down the alleyway and onto the street.

"Good going bringing up, Bowers in front of her." Stan shot at Richie who put his hands up in front of him defensively with a confused look. Eddie was looking at Richie too with an annoyed expression on face like he expected Richie to be a little smarter.

"Yeah dude you know what she did."

"What did she do?" Ben asked looking up the boys from his spot on the crate.

"More like who she didn't do," Richie snickered cheekily as he clutched the front of his shorts making me look away with a disgusted roll of my eyes. Gross. "From what I hear the list is bigger than my wang."

Stan looked up at the sky like he was preying for help, "That's not saying much."

"T – They're just rumours." Bill spoke up in defence for Beverly. He had never believed those rumours. Not once, not even when the rest of the group would talk about it.

"And those rumours were made up by Henry, I've never seen Beverly even hang out with boy. Those rumours are horse shit." I told the boys firmly eyeing them all disapprovingly. We all knew better to believe anything that came out of Henry Bowers mouth.

"Anyway, Bill had her back in third grade," Richie continued sending an abashed Bill a cheeky grin. We all knew Bill had a soft spot for Beverly. "They kissed in the school play. Darby said you can't fake that sort of passion. Now, pip – pip and tallyho my dear fellows. I do believe this chap needs our upmost attention. Get in their doctor K and fix him up!"

Eddie rolled his eyes and leaned back down as he continued to help Ben with his bandages. "Why don't you shut up Einstein, because I know what I'm doing, and I don't need your British – "

"Suck the wound!" Richie shouted pointed at Ben interrupting Eddie's

probably long rant. "Get in there."

"If Beverly's coming to the gorge tomorrow why don't you come Ben?" I suggested moving around the bantering pair to stand between Stan and Bill. Ben looked up at us frowning making me hesitate, maybe I shouldn't have asked him to hang out. It would probably make a larger target on his back for the Bower gang if he hung around us, "If you feel up to it, that is."

"If that's alright with you guys." Ben replied softly.

"Sure, it will be fun." Stan agreed. "Have you ever been?"

"No, I've been here for four months and no one's shown me around. I haven't gotten anyone to show me around, really." Ben blushed as he began to play with his hands, looking away from us embarrassed. I felt bad for him. It was hard to make friends in Derry, especially if you were new or different from everyone else.

"You have us, now" Bill proclaimed. Stan and I nodded agreeing with him.

"Yeah, we can show you everything! The arcade, the ice cream shop –

" – Don't forget the dams – "

" – Or the bookshop – "

" – Who cares about the bookshop! All he needs to know is the arcade and the nearest diner."

"Shut up, Richie!"

By the time Eddie had finished fixing up Ben's stomach we had all given Ben as much information as we could about Derry. The best places to hang around, the places and people to avoid, which diner had the cheapest food and more. Ben took this all in with a large smile that gotten bigger every time another one of us spoke up to talk to him. Eddie and Richie took Ben home after we all promised to meet up at 10 in the morning in front of the pharmacy to go to the gorge while Stan, Bill and I rode our bikes back to our houses. Stan was the first to go with a quick goodbye as he ran into his house

leaving only me and Bill to ride to our homes.

"You still have a crush on Beverly?" I spoke up, laughing loudly as I saw Bill swivel his bike beside me in surprise. "I'm going to take that as a yes."

Bill cleared his throat nervously, "J – Just a s – small one. She's one of t – the only g -girl who – whose never been m – mean to us. To me or any – anyone else. And she's like us. Only she d – doesn't have p – people, f – friends, like we do. "

I knew what Bill was trying to say. Everybody in our group got bullied and if we didn't have each other we would be alone. Beverly didn't have anyone. She was alone. No friends, just people who called her names and ignored her. We we're lucky to have each other. I was lucky to have them. Happy that I made friends with Bill in preschool and that he introduced me to the others. Bill was our little leader.

"It was nice of you to invite her," I smiled deciding not to tease him this time. "And Ben looked happy to be included to. Maybe we can add them to the loser club."

"Soon we'll have to m – make vests" Bill joked.

"Yeah, sparkly vests with the words 'The Loser Club' written on the back in big bold letters." I suggested laughing. It didn't take long for us to get to my house as we joked about getting hats and making a song for our Loser Club. I gave Bill a parting wave before walking inside noticing that there wasn't any cars in the driveway. I grinned, no parents in the house for a while. I rushed up stairs and turned the bath on, locking the door behind me. I rarely got the time to have baths since my mother spent all her time in the bathroom putting all her different creams and lotions on and when she was done, my father would then have long showers nearly taking all the hot water.

I sung one of Madonna's new songs as I pulled my hair out of its braid, untwisting my long hair carefully as I got ready for my bath when I thought I heard something, my fingers pausing their movements as I stopped singing to try and listen for whatever I had heard. I stood there silently for a moment before continuing my humming as I finished with the last part of my hair, swinging it

behind me as I began to lift my shirt up –

Float

I dropped my shirt quickly and turned around trying to find the voice that had spoken. It had been quiet, so soft that I barely heard it. But I was sure it had been a voice. I looked around the bathroom, no one was there. I warily went over to the bathroom door and unlocked it, peeking outside slowly as I edged the door slightly open. No one. I shut the door again, shaking my head. I must have been hearing things.

Lori

Float

Come float, Lori

Join us

My throat closed as I heard the voice again. But instead of just the one I heard more voices, children's voices that seemed to echo, overlapping each other as they all tried to speak at once. I'm going crazy, I thought. I shut my eyes tightly for a second, but the voices only got louder, so loud that it made my eyes snap open alarmed.

"Who are you?" I asked my voice trembling as I looked around my bathroom. It went quiet, only for a second as the voices all spoke at once, echoing in the quiet bathroom.

You know us

"I don't think I do." I said. I walked further into the bathroom, my heart beating against my chest as I moved closer to the bath. It sounded like it was coming from there, I leant over the bath and turned the tap off. I asked the question again, "Who are you?"

Come float!

I screamed as two long arms came out of the water, reaching for me, I tried to jump back but the arms grabbed me and pulled me forward towards the water, I tried to struggle but it made it worse as I slipped

on the tiles that were now drenched from the water from the tub and I slipped directly into the bath, strong hands gripping the sides of arms as I was dragged down. I quickly shut my mouth as I fell into the water face first, my whole body was submerged as I tried to get back up, but something was holding me down. I couldn't get my face out from underneath the water, the urge to breath was becoming harder to ignore as I fought against whatever was holding me down. I opened my eyes underneath the water and screamed, gurgling on the bathwater. There were all these hands, all around the inside of the bath, holding a different part of my body down. This cant be happening, none of this could be happening. I can't breathe, I've got to get out.

I ripped my eyes away from the hands to stare upwards, my chest was beginning to hurt now and there was a pounding in my head that wouldn't go away. I was getting tired. But then I saw something, someone was near the bath. They could help me! But they weren't doing anything, why weren't they doing anything? The figure leaned down, it's face nearly touching the water and I froze. It wasn't my mother or father. Instead it looked like a clown, face painted white with a wide red grin painted on its face. But it's eyes. They looked unhuman as they down at me gleefully, they were bright yellow. I closed my eyes tightly and turned my head away from it.

This isn't real. This isn't happening. This isn't real. This isn't happening.

I repeated it over and over until I could no longer feel the hands pushing me down into the water, I pushed myself up out of the water gasping as I struggled to breath. I glanced around me frantically trying to spot the clown, but nothing was there. Just me, drenched and gasping for air.